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Christian Submission to Civil Government.

DISCOURSE

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ROM. xiii. 1—7.

Let every ſoul be ſubject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whoſoever therefore reſiſteth the power, reſiſteth the ordinance of God: and they that reſiſt ſhall receive to themſelves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou ſhalt have praiſe of the ſame. For he is the miniſter of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the ſword in vain: for he is the miniſter of God; a revenger to execute *wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye muſt needs be ſubject, not only for wrath, but alſo for conſcience ſake. For, for this cauſe pay ye tribute alſo: for they are God's miniſters, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute* is due; *cuſtom to whom cuſtom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.*

WE have been often told, chriſtians, that good men, and particularly miniſters of religion, have nothing to do with what they call politicks or civil government. We beg leave to

 diſclaim

diſclaim this groundleſs opinion, and to offer at leaſt one argument againſt it. Good men are bound by the religion of Jeſus Chriſt to diſcharge thoſe duties, which as good ſubjects they owe to their civil governors: but it is impoſſible to diſcharge an obligation as good men, that is, wiſely and virtuouſly, without knowing the nature, the extent, and the motives of it. Miniſters are both bound, in common with other chriſtians, to perform the duties of good ſubjects, and alſo to explain the nature and enforce the practice of them on others. How can they do ſo, unleſs they underſtand the ſubject themſelves, and publickly treat of it in the courſe of their miniſtrations? What! was not the writer of the epiſtle to the Romans a good man? Was not he an inſpired miniſter of Chriſt? Yet he addreſſed all chriſtians in theſe words, *Let every ſoul be ſubject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whoſoever therefore reſiſteth the power, reſiſteth the ordinance of God: and they that reſiſt ſhall receive to themſelves damnation.* And ſo on.

Let us then apply ourſelves to the ſubject, and let me ſuppoſe you will give ſuch attention to it as its importance demands. If any occaſional hearers

hearers ridicule either the ſubject itſelf, or the plain manner in which it will be taught, we glory in affirming, we have no feelings on this occaſion. We ſpeak to be underſtood, and if we be ſo happy as to convey our ideas, to inform any of their duty, and engage them to practiſe it, we have our reward. May the Governor of the Univerſe, the God of order, condeſcend to write the doctrine on all our hearts!

I freely confeſs, my brethren, I never read the text without emotions of pity. Pity that ſuch writers as S. Paul, pity that ſuch a wiſe and well written period as this, naturally ſo conducive to the good of ſociety, ſhould be ſo perverted and miſconſtrued as they have been by ſelf-intereſted expoſitors! In the times of our anceſtors, in the days of deſpotiſm, thouſands and tens of thouſands have been expended in hiring pens to pervert, or in rewarding them for perverting, the ſacred oracles of God, and thus S. Paul has been converted into a conſpirator againſt the rights of mankind, and made to affirm, that thoſe Britons who *reſiſted* the unconſtitutional polity of a Stuart, that ſuch proteſtants as refuſed to practiſe the ſuperſtitions of a popiſh prince, *ſhould receive to themſelves eternal damnation.* What could be

done in the dilemma, into which ſome of our former kings had brought themſelves? Either the bible muſt be taken away from the people, or the people muſt be taught that it ſpoke a language ſuited to the views of their rulers. But God forbid we ſhould think S. Paul an enemy to civil and religious liberty! He derived his ſentiments of government from the moſt juſt and humane of all rulers, and he was an inconvertible divine, for his goſpel was in all countries and at all times *yea and Amen.* In order to give you a juſt notion of his doctrine, we ſhall lay down three propoſitions, and explain them as we go on.

I. *The apoſtle ſpeaks in the text of* GOVERNMENT, *not of governors.* This is the true key of the thirteenth of Romans, and with this the whole period, that has been read to you, ſoftly opens to the hand of a child. *Let every ſoul be ſubject to civil government—there is no government but of God—the governments that be are ordained of God. Whoſoever therefore reſiſteth government, reſiſteth the ordinance of God—Wilt thou have nothing to fear from government? Do that which is good, and thou ſhalt have praiſe of the ſame.*

That

That this is the meaning of the apoſtle is evident, I think, from the following conſiderations. Firſt, The propoſitions laid down in the text are not true of all civil governors: but they are all both true and uſeful, if applied to government itſelf. Let us try one or two for example.

Wilt thou then not be afraid of the *ruler, Nero?* Do that which is good, and thou ſhalt have praiſe of Nero. Paul knew better than to affirm this: but take the words in the other ſenſe, and they contain a truth of excellent uſe. Wilt thou then not be afraid of *government?* Do that which is good, and thou ſhalt enjoy the benefit of government: perhaps ſhare the honours of it.

Thus again, *The powers that be are ordained of God.* The apoſtle could not mean to affirm, that the civil governors then reigning in the world had been immediately ordained of God to reign. Some of them had riſen to govern by the choice of the people, others by the adoption of their predeceſſors, and others by fraud and bribery, violence and blood: but no miſſionary from heaven had called out and anointed any one of them.

Nor

Nor could the apoſtle mean to affirm, that any form of civil government was of divine appointment, for there had been in the world before his time, and there were when he wrote theſe words, as there have been ever ſince, various forms of civil government: but none of them of divine inſtitution. Civil government is one thing, and the mode of adminiſtering it another. The firſt is an inſtitute of God, the laſt a mere effect of human reaſon. The forms of adminiſtering government are generally reducible to three. There is the monarchical, in which one monarch governs, either by himſelf, and then it is an abſolute monarchy, or with the aſſiſtance of others, and then it is a mixt monarchy. There is the ariſtocratical, which is in the hand of nobles. There is laſtly the democratical, where the adminiſtration of government is, by the ſuffrages of the people, put into the hands of a body ſelected from themſelves. Neither of theſe is of divine appointment, for all the revealed inſtitutes of God are contained in the bible, and there we have no command on this ſubject. The truth is, the beſt mode of governing is a matter of reaſoning and not of faith, and the divine ſpirit has not waſted the noble gift of inſpiration upon unneceſſary ſubjects. Mankind are left here to the uſe of

their

their reaſon, and reaſon is ſufficient on this article without revelation, as we have ſeen in many pagan governments.

Of all, who have taught the divine right of any mode of government, ſurely thoſe foreign declaimers, who affirm the divine right of abſolute monarchy, are the moſt unhappy of mankind in the choice of their arguments. They leave the ground of chriſtian action, the new teſtament, they appeal to maxims of Jewiſh polity long ſince aboliſhed, and involve themſelves in the difficulty of reconciling ancient Jewiſh hiſtory to their own notion. They could not chooſe a book leſs to their purpoſe, as it would be eaſy in a multitude of inſtances to ſhew.

We are then to ſuppoſe S. Paul ſpeaking of civil government in general. *The powers that be are ordained of God*, is as much as to ſay, Civil government in every country, let it be veſted where it may, is agreeable to the original deſign of the wiſe Creator, who formed mankind for ſociety, and diſpoſed them ſo as to render order and government neceſſary. Obſerve a family. The children have wants: but no means of ſupplying them. The parents have power to ſupply thoſe wants,

wants, and are diſpoſed to adminiſter to the children. Look into a manufactory, that employs ten thouſand perſons. One thouſand are formed capable of comprehending and performing only a ſmall inconſiderable part of the labour of the work; another thouſand are equal to another narrow circle, they form the next link in the chain: but there is one man who ſeems to have as much ſoul as providence has beſtowed on all the reſt; he comprehends the whole, and is therefore naturally formed to arrange, diſpoſe, direct and govern all. The ſame may be ſaid of a general and his army, an admiral and his fleet, a prince and his people, and hence ariſe the noble works of all ſorts, that cover the earth, and the moral obligations, that unite man to man. Indeed genius without ſtrength would be a ſource of miſery, as ſtrength without ſkill would be a weight of miſchief. The diſtribution, that providence has made of wiſdom to one, patience to another, courage to a third, ſtrength to a fourth, fancy and fire to this man, corrective coolneſs of judgment to that, and ſo on, affords a full demonſtration that reciprocal aid was originally intended to be eſtabliſhed by the Creator, that the ſubordination of ſome and the ſuperiority of others were firſt principles of creation, and conſequently that he who reſiſteth civil

order

order and government, *reſiſteth the ordinance of God*; juſt as the man, who revels through the night, and ſleeps all the day, *reſiſteth*, as far as he can, *the ordinances of heaven**, that is, the *order* of darkneſs and light eſtabliſhed in the heavens by the Creator of the world.

Of this conformity to order the apoſtle was a paſſionate admirer, and of this he ſpeaks in the text. In the fifteenth chapter of the firſt epiſtle to the Corinthians he treats of the order and beauty of *nature*, of things celeſtial and things terreſtrial, and obſerves, that there is an order analogous to it eſtabliſhed in the church, a *ſpiritual* order pervading, cementing, and adorning the whole, from the firſt Great Spirit to the laſt reſurrection. There is *God all in all*—there is a *Son ſubject unto him*—there is a ſecond *Adam*, the head of a new world, in which *every man* is placed *in his own order—Chriſt the firſt fruits; afterward they that are Chriſt's at his coming*. In the twelfth chapter of the ſame epiſtle, he treats of *moral* order directed by chriſtian doctrine, under the beautiful ſimilitude of a natural body governed by reaſon, in which *the eye cannot ſay unto the hand, I have no need of thee, nor again the*

 head

* Jer. xxxiii. 25.

head to the feet, I have no need of you. In this chapter he ſpeaks of *civil* order, the arrangement of human ſocieties, and, agreeably to his general favourite notion of analogy, calls it an *ordinance* of God, by which he means to affirm, that civil government is founded on the nature of things, and that there is a fitneſs between that and thoſe abilities and diſpoſitions, which the Creator hath formed in mankind. Were the world all innocent, civil government would naturally riſe out of eminent abilities and virtues (for there might be degrees of excellence where all were good.) If the world were all vicious, government (ſuch as it would be) would neceſſarily riſe out of dread of injury. The world in its preſent ſtate is both ſtrengthened by virtue and endangered by vice, and both render government neceſſary. Here are black crimes, producing great injuries; it is natural for the defenceleſs to deſire protection from theſe, and it is juſt, and therefore an inſtitute of God, that the ſtrong ſhould defend the weak. Here are ſmall degrees of intelligence and virtue wiſhing to be directed and emboldened to excel, and here are ſuperior abilities and qualities ready to direct and improve them. He, therefore, that reſiſteth civil government, reſiſteth the manifeſt deſign of God, which is to gratify

tify the lawful wiſhes of all mankind, to intimidate vice, to cheriſh virtue, and ſo to produce ſocial felicity.

What! do all civil governments produce theſe effects? And does S. Paul mean to affirm, that any ſort of polity renders ſociety happy? Our anſwer will be contained in the ſecond propoſition, to which let us proceed.

II. *The apoſtle ſpeaks in the text of a* GOOD *civil government.* The proofs of this lie in the text, and the leaſt attentive may perceive them. S. Paul's *powers are of God.* Did *God* ever commiſſion vice, and give legal powers to illegal actions? The apoſtle's *rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil: miniſters of God to us for good:* and to theſe we are to be *ſubject for conſcience ſake.* It muſt therefore be a good government, of which he ſpeaks; for the *conſcience* of a chriſtian can never be bound over to vice and miſery.

Two queſtions naturally ariſe here, firſt, What is a good civil government? next, Who is to judge when a civil government is good?

In anſwer to the firſt we beg leave to obſerve, that we are not now to treat of this queſtion in a

political but in a moral view. They, who inveſtigate the ſubject as politicians, compare monarchy with ariſtocracy, and both with a democratical government, and determine for one in preference to the other two: but a chriſtian view of government regards leſs the mode of adminiſtration than the order adminiſtered. In this view we affirm a monarchy is a good government, and it is not; an ariſtocracy is a good government, and it is not; and ſo of the laſt, for each may produce ſocial happineſs, and either may deſtroy it.

In general the goodneſs of a government depends on two things—the good *principles*, which conſtitute it—and the proper *powers*, that realize theſe principles, and reduce them to practice in actual adminiſtration. Mankind have certain native inherent rights, ſecurities of theſe rights are the firſt principles of a good conſtitution: but as the beſt conſtitution, like every thing human, may degenerate, a government is only good, when it retains power to reduce its principles to practice.

To be more particular. That we call a good government, which places the *perſon* of each individual in ſecurity. This article includes the life and limbs, the health and reputation of every innocent

innocent member of ſociety. *Powers*, that preſerve all theſe, *are of God*, for theſe are his gifts, and they are the natural rights of all mankind.

Again, That is a good civil government, which inſures to the citizen his perſonal *liberty*, and ſubjects none to the fear of arbitrary impriſonment or exile. How miſerable are thoſe countries, in which innocent ſubjects may be inſtantly deprived of their liberty, rent from their families, and driven either to periſh in a dungeon, or to quit their native ſoil, at the deſpotical mandate of a paſſionate ruler!

A good civil government protects each individual in the abſolute enjoyment and diſpoſal of his *property*. Property is the ground of power, and power will always follow property. A people, who would enjoy freedom, can never be too cautious in diſpoſing of their property. While they hold it themſelves, they hold the golden ſceptre of government: when they transfer it to their rulers, and alienate it from themſelves, they exchange that ſceptre of gold for a rod of iron, which, not unfrequently, ſmites and puniſhes them for their folly.

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That is a good civil government, which allows and protects the rights of *conſcience*. This is one of the deareſt rights of an intelligent being, and the fulleſt enjoyment of it cannot, in a well ordered ſtate, include any civil diſability; on the contrary, a good conſcience is the beſt qualification of a magiſtrate. Nothing can contribute more to the moral good of a nation than freeing conſcience from all human reſtraints, and it may juſtly be queſtioned, whether the ſad want of religious principle, and the conſequent depravity of manners, of which ſome whole nations complain, be not in a great meaſure owing to arbitrary impoſitions on conſcience, the ſetting of human authority in this throne of Almighty God.

That we rightly deem a good civil government, which renders *juſtice* cheap to the poor, eaſy to the illiterate, acceſſible to all. No government can be good, unleſs it includes an univerſal reſponſibility, and provides for the diſplay of publick virtue, or the detection of publick iniquity, by ſubjecting all to account for the wealth, the power, and the truſt committed to them for the general good. Government is ſo far perfect or imperfect as it renders the calling of adminiſtrators to account eaſy or difficult.

Theſe

Theſe are a few outlines of ſuch a government as S. Paul meant in the text. To ſuch a government and to no other do his propoſitions agree. Let us ſuppoſe a ſtate the reverſe of all this, and let us ſee how little like a man, a chriſtian, or an apoſtle, S. Paul would ſeem, were he to ſpeak thus. *The powers that be are ordained of God* to impriſon, to baniſh, and to kill the citizens. *Whoſoever reſiſteth the power*, that oppreſſeth the conſciences, and waſtes the property of the people, *reſiſteth the ordinance of God. Let every ſoul be* ſo *ſubject to* theſe *higher powers*, as to place them above the reach of law, beyond the power of all human reſtraint.

Alas! how little muſt they know the apoſtle, who imagine he taught ſuch a doctrine as this! His goſpel would then have been *yea*, and his politicks *nay*, that is, the one would have conſiſted of principles the moſt juſt and liberal, the other of principles directly oppoſite, and had power once protected the iniquitous ſide, there would not have remained to mankind in future ſo much as one gleam of hope of redemption from abounding vice and miſery.

We aſk further, who is to judge when a government

vernment is good? We anſwer, in an abſolute monarchy the monarch alone; in an ariſtocracy the nobles only; in a democracy the people: but, in a mixed ſtate, in which the excellencies of the three are united, judging in ordinary caſes belongs to delegates, and in extraordinary caſes it reverts to the people, the allowed origin of power, agreeably to that original contract, real or ſuppoſed, by which the people agreed to confer, and the delegates to accept certain honours and emoluments for the diſcharge of preſcribed ſervices, of the punctual performance of which conditions the contractors are to judge. Natural juſtice requires a ſtipulated ſervice for a ſtipulated ſum, and it would be miſerable folly in contracting parties to deprive themſelves of the right of judging whether the ſtipulated conditions were performed. Take away the power of inſpecting and coercing the conditions of a contract, and the remaining right of making one is at beſt only a power of ſelf deception, and it may be in many caſes an engine of ſelf deſtruction.

The writer of our text was a private citizen, and to private citizens he addreſſed this epiſtle: yet he treats here of government in general, and the duty of rulers in particular, and he adds the

cauſe,

cauſe, the reaſon, for which his readers were to *pay tribute*. In the apoſtle's ſyſtem, the people were to judge to whom *honour* and *tribute* were due, they were to *render* what they thought due to each degree of magiſtratical merit, and they were to *pay* what tribute they judged neceſſary. The rulers were not to hire the people: but the people, who held the publick purſe, were to pay tribute to the rulers. Indeed, chriſtians at Rome had loſt, along with the reſt of their fellow citizens, the power of reſtraining the iniquity of their rulers: but they had never relinquiſhed the right of judging when they deſerved reſtraint. A good government, like a good religion, or a fair trade, deals very little in ſecrets: it *commends itſelf to every man's conſcience in the ſight of God*, and on this account our text informs us, we *muſt needs be ſubject for conſcience ſake*. This leads us to the laſt article.

III. *The non-reſiſtance inculcated in the text muſt be* RESTRAINED TO THE SUBJECT, *of which the apoſtle ſpeaks*. The laws of right reaſoning require us to put no more in the concluſion than the premiſes contain. The reaſons of a duty are a ſort of premiſes, the practice of it a kind of concluſion. The apoſtle therefore means to ex-

hort us never to reſiſt: but always to ſupport a *good* civil government.

Suppoſe a ſtate, in which rulers were not a terror to *evil* works, but to *good*; can we imagine an apoſtle would exhort a people able to right themſelves in this manner? *Wilt thou have nothing to fear from authority? Do that which is* EVIL, *and thou ſhalt have praiſe of the ſame. But if thou do that which is* GOOD, *be afraid, for the ruler is the miniſter of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth* GOOD. *Wherefore, ye muſt needs be ſubject for conſcience ſake; for, for this cauſe pay ye tribute.* Should men pay for the violation of their rights? And would an apoſtle cheriſh the dominion of ſin? My brethren, we congratulate you, that ye are Britons—that your conſtitution, the wiſdom of ages, was fully elucidated at the happy æra of the revolution—that the people were then allowed to be the origin of power, having a right to claim redreſs of grievances, and in extraordinary caſes to redreſs themſelves. Then the juſt ſentiments of S. Paul were interwoven in the bill of rights, and the bible and the ſenate united to declare, *Rulers* ſhall *be miniſters of God to us for* GOOD, *and for this cauſe will* WE PAY THEM *tribute.* Rulers ſhall hold the power, and the people the purſe.

To

To illuſtrate this part of our ſubject, let us divide it into the two great branches of *civil* and *religious* liberty, and let us exemplify both in our apoſtle. In regard to *religious* liberty, we may obſerve—that S. Paul was not of the religion of the prince—that his religion was deſtructive of paganiſm, the eſtabliſhed religion—and that he devoted his whole life to propagate his own, and conſequently to diminiſh that of the rulers. If this was reſiſtance, S. Paul reſiſted: but this was not the reſiſtance which he ſpoke againſt in the text. There he cenſures a reſiſtance of a good government: but a good government, by allowing the rights of conſcience retains nothing on this article to be reſiſted by a good man. If the apoſtle, in exerciſing the rights of his own conſcience, did not injure the rights of other men; if he made uſe of no civil coercion to propagate his doctrine; if he raiſed no tumult, no ſedition; but confined himſelf to the calm methods of reaſoning and converſing on, preaching, publiſhing and practiſing what he thought religious truth, he ſhould not have fallen a ſacrifice to the envy or reſentment of his enemies, his blood ſhould not have ſtained the pretended government of Rome. Thus his own practice explained his doctrine, and he thought himſelf a good ſubject although he kept none of

the feſtivals of the emperor Nero, in whoſe reign he wrote the text. The feſtivals! the inſtitutes! the religion of Nero! What are we ſaying? Even Tacitus, a pagan, and every other Roman hiſtorian would reprove us; they never thought Nero had any religion; they conſidered him as a bad man, unworthy of the honours, which had been conferred on him. S. Paul thought him a *lion**, reigning over men as beaſt over beaſt, where appetite and ſtrength are inſtead of reaſon and law. Paganiſm, my brethren, made ſuch men high prieſts, and placed them at the head of the religion of whole countries, and popery, which is paganiſm diſguiſed, hath copied the example. Hence ideots and atheiſts have been the reputed wiſdom of a nation, and the moſt iniquitous of men the ſtandards of piety to God and benevolence to their fellow creatures. Were it poſſible for Paul to inſult my reaſon and my conſcience by requiring my conformity to the religion of ſuch rulers as catholicks adore, even Paul ſhould be no apoſtle to me.

Let us advert a moment to *civil* liberty. Let us ſuppoſe our apoſtle admitted to an interview with a number of Roman ſenators, propoſing to them

* 2 Tim. iv. 17.

them the chriſtian religion, and endeavouring to recommend it in ſome ſuch manner as this. "Illuſtrious Romans! The religion, which I have the honour to propoſe to you, is the wiſdom of God, and its object is the production of the greateſt ſocial happineſs. In every point of view, permit me to affirm, it excels that, which you profeſs: and there is one article, that is, civil liberty, on which chriſtianity ſheds the brighteſt glory. Your anceſtors thought, mankind were born with certain inherent rights, they conſidered the ſecurity of theſe rights the end of civil government, when magiſtrates invaded them, they reclaimed the power, with which they had intruſted them, and placed it in other hands under new reſtrictions. Your higheſt notion of a ſupreme magiſtrate is, that he is a father and not a deſtroyer of his country, and your poets and hiſtorians, your theatres and ſenates all unite in celebrating the praiſes of ſuch men. A lover of his country is a ſaint, a hero, a deity with you. But chriſtianity reverſes all theſe ideas. It allows, indeed, that ye were born with as many rights as your predeceſſors, and one more, a right to enjoy this invaluable religion: but it requires you to renounce your notions of *government*, and to ſubmit in all caſes whatever to your civil rulers for the

the time being. If the emperor allow you to live, bleſs his clemency; if he unjuſtly cut off whole families, and depopulate whole provinces, you muſt not even attempt to reſtrain him; if he, contrary to your laws, impriſon or baniſh your perſons, take away and expend your property, reduce you from the firſt city in the world to the loweſt of all ſtates, you may feel your miſeries: but you muſt not complain; or if you complain, you muſt not be allowed to do more; in no caſe may you redreſs your own grievances, no, not though providence and the conſtitution have put the means of redreſs amply in your own power." . . . . According to this account, the old Romans would have been put into a worſe condition by Jeſus Chriſt than they had been in before his coming, and to have gone from paganiſm to chriſtianity would have been like going *down from Jeruſalem to Jericho, falling among thieves*, to be *ſtripped of raiment, wounded, and left half dead.*

Chriſtianity is ſo far from ſinking the dignity and felicity of man, that it conducts him to a pinnacle of glory. It teaches him a claſs of moral virtues, ſuch as induſtry, frugality, equity, and ſo on. It excites him to practiſe theſe by revealing the ſtrongeſt motives, ſuch as the love of God,

God, the example and the death of Jeſus Chriſt, a ſtate of future rewards and puniſhments. The practice of theſe virtues is the way to acquire property, and property in the hand is power of civil reſiſtance. When it is proper to make uſe of this power, and in what manner, we will not preſume at preſent to inquire; ſuffice it to ſay, it muſt be legal, conſtitutional and good, otherwiſe it would not be the reſiſtance of which we have been ſpeaking.

Let us conclude. Out of our ſubject three reflections naturally ariſe, each exciting a different emotion. The firſt ſtirs up pity and horror, the ſecond gives us pleaſure, the laſt affects us with a mild ſenſibility, for which we have no name.

1. Who can help lamenting, in the firſt place, the deplorable condition of mankind in reſpect of good government. On the one hand, thouſands, in all countries, deſtitute of all governing abilities, are aſpiring to dominion, or, having obtained it, calling authority government, and confounding power to do good with a ſort of indefeaſible right to do wrong. On the other hand, millions of intelligent creatures devoid of all pride of nature and ſenſe of ſhame, bartering the nobleſt

rights

rights of our ſpecies for a ſmile and a bauble and a luxury for a day.—Hence *folly ſet in dignity, and the rich in low place.*—Hence *the tears of ſuch as are oppreſſed, who have no comforter*, for on the *ſide of their oppreſſors there is power.*—Hence is *ſeen under the ſun the place of judgment, that wickedneſs is there, and the place of righteouſneſs that iniquity is there.*—Hence *oppreſſions making wiſe men mad.* Hence, in a word, the ills that blaſt religion and learning, labour and commerce, and all the other efforts of the few to make the many happy. Can ye conceive, brethren, a lower degree of wretchedneſs than that, with which a prophet formerly upbraided his countrymen: *Ye have ſold yourſelves for nought!* Ah! would to God this were the utmoſt, that ſordid men could do! Cruel Jews! had ye ſold yourſelves alone, ye would have ſuffered, and we might have profited by your example: but your guiltleſs countrymen, your wives, your children, your innocent poſterity yet unborn, muſt they be all involved in your puniſhment as if they had perpetrated your crime! . . . . Here we feel the want of a religion, that opens to our faith a future ſtate, where *the wicked ceaſe from troubling, and the weary are at reſt.*

2. Great

2. Great God! Firſt and beſt of beings! Permit our weeping eyes to look to thee as the God of order, the patron and protector of all, who endeavour to gather up right notions, and to reeſtabliſh that fitneſs, which ſin had ſubverted and wantonly thrown in ſhattered ruins all over the globe! Chriſtians, the empire of God is an empire of order, and the goſpel of Chriſt is intended to diffuſe it among all ranks and degrees of men. The perfections of the Great Supreme are engaged to give this noble deſign effect. Have they, think ye, ſpent all their force? Turn from this preſent ſcene of confuſion and woe—enter into your cloſets—fix your attention on the King of Kings, who diſdains to reign by power alone, and who makes *judgment and juſtice the baſes of his throne.* Behold! HE condeſcends to treat his intelligent creatures like men, and makes them judges between him and his vineyard.* The Son, too, the *expreſs image* of the Father, intends to *deliver up the kingdom*†, and to diſplay the rectitude of his government of it, in the ſight of angels and men. Then *every eye ſhall ſee him*, and, although they, who reſiſted his wiſe and benevolent plan, ſhall wail and mourn, yet he will perſevere in his firſt deſign, he will cauſe every one to

* Iſa. v. † 1 Cor. xv.

give account of his deeds done in the body, and he will render to all their dues, honour to whom honour, and ſhame to whom ſhame is due. Thus will he aſſort mankind, and cauſe in a future ſtate univerſal juſtice through everlaſting ages to reign. Delightful proſpect! Believer! fill thine eye with this object, and catch a flame, that ſhall never go out.

In the preſent momentary ſtate, Providence, indeed, ſometimes permits ſociety to fall into dreadful diſorders, which, like floods, firſt overflow the low grounds, and at laſt roll back, ſap and ſubvert the proud mountains whence they fell, mixing all in one general confuſion; for deſpotical principles are as fatal to thrones as to cottages, a while they afflict the laſt, but in the end they never fail to crumble the firſt into ruins. Fear nothing, then, my countrymen, from foreign foes. The thrones of Bourbon are not the powers we chooſe, they are *thrones of iniquity*, ſhall they *have fellowſhip with God?* So many lives as they have unjuſtly cut off, ſo much publick property as they have miſapplied, ſo much liberty as they have taken from mankind, ſo many upright conſciences as they have oppreſſed, ſo much fraud and violence as they have practiſed, ſo much human

human felicity as they have deſtroyed, juſt ſo much guilt have they acquired, and ſo much puniſhment, ſooner or later, will the Omnipotence, that ſupports the juſt order of the univerſe, inflict on them. I fear nothing from their arms: but their principles, their maxims of government I fear. Ah! ſhould my countrymen ever imbibe the errors of their *government* (ſo they call their *power.)* and the vices that give thoſe errors effect, we ſhould be poiſoned in our vitals, and then, who could help exclaiming, Britain *is falling, is falling?* . . . Oh! no, my country muſt not fall . . or, if it fall, let me fall with it, and be intombed in its ruins! Let me have the honour of entering the world of order ſtruggling for what gives that world all its beauty and glory.

3. Finally, we reflect with an emotion made up of pleaſure, gratitude, hope and fear, on the recovery to order, civil and ſacred, begun in civil government by right reaſon in the world, and in the hearts of good men by chriſtian faith. Our anceſtors, like others, were ſunk in ſtupidity and ſin; half were tyrants and half were ſlaves: but on them the light of reaſon and the religion of Jeſus Chriſt ſhone, and we, my brethren, we are entered

entered into their labours. We enjoy the benefits of their reaſoning, writing, ſufferings and blood. Why are we not a nation all wiſe and good! Why not all burning with zeal for the welfare of our country, and attached to all the principles, that brought it out of the darkneſs of deſpotiſm into the broad day of light and liberty! Divine order! where ſhall we find thee? In our boſoms? In our families? In our churches? In the whole world? Would to God it might pervade all! It gives us pleaſure to ſee it in ſo many. It excites our gratitude to God the author for what we have, and our hope that it will increaſe more and more. Yet we behold with reverence and fear; for order begun in us reſembles the morning of a ſpring day, it has obſcurity clouds and rain, the remains of a winter juſt gone, and brightneſs and beauty, the beginnings of a ſummer, now at hand. May God, of his infinite mercy, ſucceed every effort to extend a virtuous order! May he free us all from the immoderate paſſion of ſubduing others, and give us grace to govern ourſelves. To him be honour and glory for ever! Amen.

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